

BIRTHDAYS PLUS GIFT SHOP

Birthdays Plus Gift Shop is a one-stop Special Event Planning Gift Shop that was started in 1994 and is now located at 5717 W. Villard Avenue in Milwaukee. The idea for the business came from a dream that started for owner Renet when she was a teen-ager. Renet would watch as her family would over-buy gifts in their attempts to get the right gift for their loved ones and friends. Her dream to give people an opportunity to give personalized gifts to those loved ones and friends evolved into Birthdays Plus.



Before finally seeing her dream come true, Renet and her partner/mother, Mrs. Sharp worked in a variety of jobs in customer service, modeling and banking that helped her tremendously. She originally started the business out of her home while she was working for others. Several things propelled Renet to follow her dream further. She found a building for sale that she could turn into a gift shop and purchased the building that now houses the business. However, she continued working for others. At her place of employment, changes were being made that didn't bode well with her so she found employment elsewhere. Renet worked at her new job for one year while she was getting her building ready for business. She also did her homework and went to Start Smart classes for several weeks and created a small business plan. She contacted the University of Wisconsin who did a market and feasibility study for her which turned out well and gave her more confidence about her idea.

At her place of employment, she heard about SCORE and contacted them in 1997. She started having meetings, conversations and training from SCORE counselor Carole Kauss. This was before she had even purchased the building that now houses the business. Renet says, "SCORE made a real difference for me because they provided me a counselor who responded to my calls and questions, looked over my business plan, met with me and provided a lot of valuable advice." Renet also has a very responsive lender and coming from a lending background, she realizes the importance of this.

Birthdays Plus is a unique business that offers balloons, fresh flowers, gift baskets, party supplies, yard signs, candles, fragrance sets and singing telegrams. They also arrange for clowns for an occasion, dinner reservations, whirlpool suites, limousines, carriage rides, helicopter rides, concert reservations, theater reservations and day spa packages. Renet says this is a family endeavor that includes mom, dad, Renet's husband, sons and a brother that assist with sales and deliveries seven days a week.

When Birthdays Plus says special event planning, they mean it. They specialize in birthday, anniversary, congratulation packages and more. If you are not quite sure what kind of special event you would like to have, they provide you with exciting ideas to truly make your event special and meaningful. This includes helping you plan the kind of event you want, making the arrangements for the event, checking out the location of the event and decorating if necessary. Also, thanks to a donation of a floral cooler, Birthdays Plus also became a florist the beginning of 2003. The business has relationships with hotels, theatres, limos and more to assist them to go the extra mile to ensure their clients truly have a memorable event. This is evidenced by the repeat business and customers who say they only shop with Birthdays Plus. Renet realizes this is the real compliment to her business.

Renet hopes that people will know that if they have a dream to keep trying. She says, “Don’t let someone else stop you or put your idea down. Surround yourself with people who can teach you how to realize your dream.”

This is a success story of a true entrepreneur that continues on with Renet now in the process of expanding her business to include a second store in another location. Part of her expansion plans includes offering free balloons for birthdays and free birthday calls including long distance. You can visit Birthdays Plus at <http://www.birthdaysplus.homestead.com> or give them a call (414) 393-9320 for your next special occasion.

